

PHILADELPHIA, September 27, 1864. 170

MY DEAR SIR:—

Our acquaintance and all of the relations that have ever existed between us are confined to two or three accidental meetings; at one of which you were pleased to refer to the lasting impression made upon you when a poor boy by the kindness of my father, who always took you by the hand and gave you cheering, friendly words of encouragement and advice. You were pleased to acknowledge to the son, the kind and valuable influences received by you from the father, and to proffer your friendly services whenever they would be acceptable.

Under the above circumstances, you prepared for me and my friends no ordinary surprise when you deliberately composed, delivered, and published in *The Press*, of the 23d inst., a voluntary unprovoked attack upon me in the following words:—

"It got out that the President was determined to have the army moved, and it was found that General McClellan had no plan; and here I may state that we owe the Peninsula campaign to those distinguished Senators, Latham of California, and Rice of Minnesota, and a brigadier in the column of Joseph Hooker. Gen. McClellan's plan was concocted by others, and put into his hands. It was agreed on in a council of war. That plan was submitted to the President. It was submitted in the presence of Secretary Stanton. Stanton put them through a strict course of examination. One General, Blenker, owned that he did not understand the plan, but would sustain it, as he thought he had to obey the mandates of his chief. General Naglee was one of those present, and Stanton observed that he had but one star. 'Sir,' said Mr. Stanton, 'you have no right here!' 'I am representing General Hooker,' said he. It was afterwards found out that General Naglee was absent without leave, and that fighting Joe Hooker knew nothing of the council." [Applause.]

Now, my dear sir, this statement is simply false, and on the part of your friend, Mr. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, maliciously false.

The Peninsular campaign was not indicated by "Senators Latham of California, and Rice of Minnesota, and a brigadier in the column of Joseph Hooker," as asserted by you. General Naglee was at Washington with proper leave, and with the full knowledge of General Hooker, and was a member of the council of war by direction of General McClellan, to represent the division of the army at Budd's Ferry, in the absence of General Hooker, who was too far removed from Washington to be present. And unfortunately for the veracity of Mr. Stanton, the impertinent remarks which you ascribe to him could not have been made, for there were no officers of the council of war entitled at that time to more than one star.

Now, Judge, you know, or should know, that the reputation of Mr. Stanton for truth and veracity is not above suspicion, and that you may well believe anything that may be said regarding his great incivility and rudeness, for, not excepting yourself, I have never seen or heard of an officer or civilian who did not condemn him for the utter want of all of the requisites of a gentleman.

This is not the first time Mr. Stanton has been guilty of the most deliberate, malicious misrepresentation, and for your gratification I will relate an instance that occurred upon my arrival in Washington, immediately after the conclusion of "the Seven Days' Fight," in the beginning of July of 1862, and when I was surprised to learn that during the continuance of that desperate struggle, and during the time of dreadful suspense, whilst nothing could be heard of General McClellan and his gallant army, Mr. Stanton had everywhere denounced General McClellan as a traitor to his country, and as incapable of commanding a regiment. I learned this from a number of the members of Congress, who were astonished and confounded, and who with pain eagerly sought from me some explanation of such extraordinary conduct. I could render them no satisfaction, but reported the circumstances to General McClellan, upon my arrival at his headquarters on the following day, the 8th of July. His surprise, Judge, was greater than mine; without uttering a word, he turned to his portfolio, took from it a letter which he placed before me, and said: "Read that; I have just received it from Mr. Stanton."

With his consent, I made a copy of the letter, and, returning to Washington, placed it in the hands of those who had heard the denunciations of Mr. Stanton, and who had advised me of them. They desired to read it to the Senate, and to publish the outrage and the vindication, and they telegraphed to Gen. McClellan for his permission, which he declined to give them. The following is a copy of the letter:—

WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C., July 5, 1862.

DEAR GENERAL: I had a talk with General Marcy, and meant to have written you by him, but am called to the country, where Mrs. Stanton is with her children, to see one of them die. I can, therefore, only say, my dear General, in this brief moment, that there is no cause in my heart or conduct for the cloud that wicked men have raised between us for their own base and selfish purposes. No man had ever a truer friend than I have been to you, and shall continue to be. You are seldom absent from my thoughts, and I am ready to make any sacrifice to aid you. Time allows me to say no more than that I pray Almighty God to deliver you and your army from all peril, and lead you on to victory.

Yours, truly,

EDWIN M. STANTON.

Now, Judge, what think you of this man, who, made Secretary of War by the request and influence of Gen. McClellan, was vilifying and abusing and uttering falsehoods against him, and who could at the same time sit down and deliberately write such a letter?

Correct

You have referred to the council of war held in Washington in March of 1862. Every effort has been made, in vain, to bring the proceedings of that council before the public. A call was made for them in the House of Representatives, and was tabled by the Republican party. A request made by the recorder of that council, of Mr. Stanton, to allow him to have the proceedings made up in proper form, was refused in a most rude and insulting manner, and the papers have never been allowed to leave his possession since.

Now, Judge, for your especial benefit, I will relate the history of that important event, that you may, if you will, do justice to all concerned.

The council of war consisted of

Brig.-Gen. Sumner,
 " McDowell,
 " Franklin,
 " F. J. Porter,
 " McCall,
 " Heintzelman,

Brig.-Gen. Keyes,
 " A. Porter,
 " W. F. Smith,
 " Barnard,
 " Blenker,
 " Naglee.

Each entitled to but "one star." It was called together by order of Gen. McClellan on the night of March 7th, 1862, to convene at 10 A. M. on the following day.

Gen. McClellan came into the council room at the hour appointed, and, placing on the table a large map, explained his proposed Peninsular Campaign, which before this time I believe to have been known to no one present excepting Gen. Franklin and probably Fitz J. Porter. Upon retiring, he left upon the table, for the consideration of the council, the following inquiries:—

I. Whether it is advisable that the base of operations shall be changed, the transportation being ready at Annapolis in all of next week.

II. Whether it is better to make an advance to the front before changing the base, should such a change be determined upon.

III. Whether a forward movement, with the object of destroying the river batteries, is advisable, and when it can be commenced, and whether the naval force, with the assistance of the Ericsson battery, can alone accomplish that object.

After a session of three hours, the council were summoned to appear before the President. He advised them that he was quite unwell and exceedingly nervous, that the pressure had been intense against Gen. McClellan. He expressed himself gratified to have the opportunity to see and know the officers of the army, and to be instructed by them in regard to army matters, which were to him very incomprehensible.

I informed him that, as recorder of the council of war which had held its session by order of Gen. McClellan, I would advise him of the result of its proceedings, and then read them to him. "What," said he, "have the council decided by a vote of eight to four—two to one—in favor of the Peninsular Campaign?" He then asked many questions in regard to the same, until Mr. Stanton came in, and I proposed to read the proceedings to him. He replied, "Give me the papers, I'll read them myself," and, after reading them over and preparing his notes, he, as you say, "put them (the council) through the strict course of examination" which you refer to. This examination, made for the purpose of neutralizing the effect of the decision of the council of war on the mind of the President, and thus of carrying out the objects of those who had been insisting upon the removal of Gen. McClellan, lasted for four or five hours, during which time it was only interrupted by an occasional expression of the President, indicating his satisfaction and gratification at the many explanations of military movements contemplated, and which he had not before been able to comprehend.

It was now getting dark. Mr. Stanton's questions indicated approaching exhaustion, and finding there was a silence which called for a cessation of hostilities on his part for the night, Mr. Lincoln expressed himself highly gratified with the interview, said he was impressed with the earnestness and intelligence of the officers present, and that he had every confidence in them. He was now determined not to remove Gen. McClellan, as he had promised to do, but that he should make his campaign, as approved by the council of war, under restrictions, which he would make known on the following morning, at ten o'clock, when he desired the presence of all of the officers of the council, and until after which time he desired that none of them should leave the city.

Before leaving the President, the Recorder of the Council approached the Secretary, and said: "If you please, Mr. Stanton, permit me to have the proceedings of the Council of War that they may be copied in a fair hand, and Gen. Sumner, the President of the Council, will sign them, the Recorder will sign them, and they will then be in proper form." "I'm just as good a judge of the form as you are," was the reply of your friend.

Other incivilities have been attempted by Mr. Stanton towards me, the manner and result of which he has neither forgotten nor forgiven, and which he may relate to you whenever he may feel so disposed.

On the following morning at the appointed hour, when all of the officers of the Council of War had assembled, Mr. Lincoln said, "I have slept better than for two weeks. I feel relieved of an immense responsibility. I have determined upon the following programme"—which he submitted verbally, and which was substantially as follows:—

"I will permit Gen. McClellan to carry out his campaign. He shall leave sufficient force to defend the works before Washington. He shall embark 50,000 men from Annapolis, and then, unless the batteries on the Potomac, which you assure me will necessarily be abandoned,

are withdrawn or silenced, I shall reserve my authority to embark other troops." He then said, "I have determined to divide Gen. McClellan's army into four corps, and I shall appoint the commanders of them." And afterwards he promoted the four officers who had opposed Gen. McClellan's campaign, three of whom he appointed to the command of corps, and, with the exception of Gens. Franklin and Smith, who have been the subjects of constant annoyance and indignities since, *the others have all been dismissed from the army.*

The Peninsular campaign was proposed by Gen. McClellan whilst commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States, and was intended to be made with the forces then under his command in Eastern Virginia, estimated at over 200,000 men. It was so accepted by the President, and the movement was commenced upon that basis. Gen. McClellan had scarcely left Washington to take the field, when the Secretary of War relieved him of all the armies not under his, (General McClellan's,) immediate command, and assumed command of them himself. The troops left in northeastern Virginia were placed under the command of McDowell, Banks, Fremont, and Sigel, each being independent of the other, and of General McClellan, and all subject to the order of Mr. Stanton. Whilst the above division of our army was taking place, the Confederates concentrated theirs until, on the 26th day of June, Gen. McClellan found himself before Richmond with 85,000 men (including McCall's division), and was attacked by the concentrated Confederate force of 175,000 at the very moment when McDowell, under protest, withdrew his assistance from McClellan, by the orders of the President and Secretary of War.

The Campaign under General Grant did not commence until the 4th of May, 1864. That of Chancellorsville, in which the casualties of that army were estimated at 30,000 men, and which but for the providential killing of Stonewall Jackson would have been annihilated, was planned by the President and Gen. Hooker, or, to use the President's own words, by "Joe and I," of which the Secretary of War and General Halleck were kept profoundly ignorant, and was not commenced until May 2, 1863; whilst that of the Peninsula, for the delay of which Gen. McClellan was so much censured, was commenced on the 25th of March, 1862, forty days in advance of either of the others.

Why this bitter enmity and persecution of General McClellan? Why in the beginning of March was the President pressed to death to remove him, even before he had made his first trial in command of the Army of the Potomac? Why did a distinguished member of the Senate on the 17th of March, write to me: "The cry against McClellan is increasing; every effort is being made to crush him"? What possible chance had General McClellan to succeed, when his own government did every thing in their power to embarrass his movements, and break him down? One would think his task sufficiently onerous, laborious, and responsible, when, without experience, after the first disastrous rout at Bull Run, he reorganized the armies of the United States and was preparing to fight them without the additional conviction being forced upon him at every step that his own government were determined "to crush him."

Judge, you and I met within ten days after the dreadful battles before Richmond. You attacked Gen. McClellan with a bitterness and feeling that ill became a Christian gentleman. I then begged you not to break down Gen. McClellan until you had given him a fair trial, and until you had found a better man, and challenged you to name a better general. I now do the same thing, and appeal to the record of the past thirty months and to the rivers of blood that have flown since to sustain what I then asserted. I refer you to the opinions of foreign officers, and I assure you that among the old officers of the army I shall be fully sustained.

The preference of Gen. McClellan for the Peninsular campaign and the condemnation of the President's plan have been fully sustained. The families and friends of the 130,000 men lost south of the Rapidan since the 4th of May last proclaim it everywhere. Mr. Stanton told the country, at that time, he had a hundred thousand men more than he wanted, and now he tells you he wants a hundred thousand more men.

General Grant crossed the Rapidan with an army variously estimated from one	120,000
hundred and eighty thousand to	40,000
He afterwards added Butler's	45,000
He was reinforced	205,000
Making, exclusive of Sigel's 30,000	50,000

On the 1st of September our forces were estimated, exclusive of Sheridan's 30,000, at

Gen. Lee had on the Rapidan, after he had concentrated his army	85,000
Beauregard joined him at Richmond with his forces from the South, which, with	30,000
those near Petersburg, amounted to	10,000
Breckinridge brought	30,000
And Lee was reinforced probably	155,000

Making in all	45,000
On the 1st of September his forces were estimated, at Richmond, at	30,000
Exclusive of Early's command	150,000

Showing the discharges and loss from Grant to be	85,000
--	--------

Judge Kelley, were the records of the Council of War, and that of "the strict course of examination" made by Mr. Stanton, indicating the very difficulties and dreadful losses Gen. Grant has lately sustained, ever placed before him? And why not? And who is responsible for the 100,000 men unnecessarily and wickedly sacrificed south of the Rapidan, in the experiment made to prove that Gen. McClellan and the Council of War were wrong, and that the President's plan was right?

The army of the United States, as you found it at the commencement of this war, was composed of a high-toned, intelligent, honorable, gallant set of men, fully equal to the contest before them; they had always studiously avoided all political connections; many of them had been thirty years in the service of their country, and had never voted. They held their country and the honor and integrity of it before every other consideration. Had a rule been adopted requiring that no political subject should be introduced into the army, but that all political rights should be respected, and had army officers only been held responsible for the conduct of the war, it would have terminated long ago.

Why have McClellan, and Sedgwick, and McPherson, and Bayard, and Franklin, and Buell, and Meade, and Averill, and Porter, and a score of other general officers, with hundreds, if not thousands, of officers of an inferior grade been offended and held back, and many of them dismissed from the army without a word of explanation, an arbitrary act unknown in Great Britain, whilst Pope, and Burnside, and Hooker, and Butler, and Hunter, and Banks, and Sigel, and Sickels, and hundreds of others, certainly no better than the former, have been preferred? Why was Gen. Stone, than whom there is not a more loyal man, and accomplished gentleman, and gallant soldier in the country, confined in prison for fifteen months? And when released by an act of Congress, why was it that neither the President, nor Secretary of War, nor Secretary of State, or other persons at Washington would assent to any knowledge or any participation in the arrest? Such outrages are calculated to break down the honor and *esprit du corps* of any army, and all have looked on with disgust, and horror, and pain at the shameful injustice and outrages that have been continually heaped upon so many of their old friends and comrades in arms, whom they know incapable of an ungentlemanly, dishonorable, unsoldierly, or disloyal act.

Why did the Committee on the Conduct of the War investigate and falsify with such nice precision the conduct of McClellan and his friends, and overlook the volumes of charges filed in the War Department against Fremont, and Sigel, and Hunter, and others, and entirely overlook the immense slaughter at Chancellorsville, and Fredericksburg, and south of the Rapidan? Why did a secret political inquisition, with no other pretext than that they suspected him of political ambition, sit over five hundred days and manufacture over seventeen hundred pages of *ex parte* testimony against a young officer, a Christian gentleman, an honest man, who, heaven only knows, never had but one purpose and that to serve his country and his God?

You know, Judge, that whilst in Washington General McClellan studiously avoided all political association, and to such an extent that many of his friends of both parties were much offended.

The first knowledge that I ever had of any political ambition on his part was after he had been retired from active service and sent in disgrace to New Jersey, and this was after his fitness for the succession had been discovered by Mr. Lincoln, and the people had signified their affection for him. His letters and orders have been called political, but they were eminently proper, and refer entirely to the military policy of the country. But, Judge, suppose we admit that General McClellan had an ambition to be President of the United States, was it not a laudable ambition, and is there any impropriety in it? Is the field not open to him as well as to Mr. Lincoln, or Mr. Fremont, or Mr. Chase, or the many others infinitely his inferiors?

So far as the objections to his military qualifications are concerned we have only to remind you that, within the last sixty days, a confidential friend of the President was sent to offer him one of the most important commands of the army. But this proposition was coupled with the most dishonorable condition that he should decline to be a candidate for the Presidency. General McClellan restrained his indignation, and replied to the bearer of the message, "Go back to Washington, and say to the President for me, that when I receive my official written orders he shall have my answer."

Beware, Judge, of the intemperate abuse of your political opponents, as proud and loyal as you are, who would rather see the Continent of America sink into the ocean, with all that dwells upon it, than see our nationality destroyed; who will not endure this constant usurpation of authority and encroachment upon their rights, and whom you may drive into a dreadful conflict, in which the abolitionist and the negro may find themselves arrayed against all who will unitedly stand, hand in hand, and shoulder to shoulder, in defence of the Constitution and the fundamental laws of the land.

Very respectfully,

HENRY M. NAGLEE.

To HON. WILLIAM D. KELLEY,
PHILADELPHIA.